

COINS

Order now: '81 sets may sell out

By Roger Boye

If you want to buy 1981-proof coins from the federal government, get your order in as soon as possible.

That's the advice of hobby experts who predict the 1981-proof set may be one of the most popular in years, thanks to the 1981-dated Susan B. Anthony dollars to be included in each set.

Under current plans, Uncle Sam will produce about 5 million 1981 dollars for coin sets, but none for circulation. Banks have many millions of 1979 and 1980 Anthony dollars in storage, more than enough to satisfy the demands of American business this year for the little-used coin.

Without any "circulation strikes," collectors who want to own 1981 Anthony dollars will be forced to buy government coin sets, making each set a sought-after collector's item. In fact, a few experts believe the sets will become "hot," although most pros are more cautious with their price forecasts.

At any rate, government bureaucrats will accept proof-set orders from now until about June 1, unless the number of orders exceeds production capacity. If so, an earlier cutoff date will be announced.

With the Anthony dollar excitement, the final order

day might come as early as May 1. Last year the government processed proof-set orders for only 39 days, from April 1 to May 9, although it had planned to take orders for 60 days.

Besides the Anthony dollar, each 1981 set will contain five other coins (cent through half-dollar). All proof coins will be made in San Francisco and carry an "S" mint mark.

As in past years, a collector may order no more than five sets. But 1981 sets will cost \$11 each, a dollar more than Uncle Sam charged for 1980 sets and \$2 more than the 1979s.

No matter what the issue price, proof sets often increase in value as they are sold on the "coin market" by collectors and dealers. For example, many coin dealers pay about \$15 each for 1980 sets, 50 per cent more than the issue price. The 1978 and 1979 sets have increased in value by somewhat greater amounts.

To order 1981-proof sets, send a check or money order, made payable to Bureau of the Mint, to the mint at 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Cal. 94175. Although many 1980 sets weren't mailed to collectors until February, 1981, the Treasury Department says it will try to ship all 1981 sets by next Dec. 1.

"Proofs" are the shiniest, sharpest coins produced by the government. Workers use specially polished "blanks" and double-strike each coin to ensure a clear design.

Sets of 1981 uncirculated coins will go on sale in late summer.